

Consultion  
OF  
CONSCIENCE  
Condemned.

WHEREIN  
Is plainly Demonstrated how  
Inconsistent it is with Scripture, the  
Fundamental Laws of *England*, and  
Common Equity, &c.

Mat. 7. 12. *Whatsoever ye would, that Men  
should do to you, do ye even so to them: For  
this is the Law and the Prophets.*

*Quid Tibi non vis, Alteri ne feceris.*

By T. H.

LONDON,

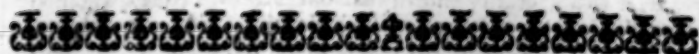
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Constitution

TO

CONSCIENCE

Condensed.



## Compulsion of Conscience Condemned, &c.

**T**Here are a sort of Fierce and ill Natur'd *Pasquillers*, that keep a Bawling at all works of this Nature, though the Design be never so Innocent; The Dread of those, shan't Terrifie me from presenting these few Sheets to the Publick, Premising the true State of the Case by me asserted, *viz. That the Mind and Conscience of Man, with respect to Divine Truths, ought not to be Compell'd by outward Violence, and therefore that it is unreasonable and unseasonable to Persecute so many of his Majesties Protestant-Subjects, merely for their Nonconformity, to sayls, Fines, Banishment, and to the Spoiling and taking away their Goods, &c.* the Demonstration of which shall be clearly and briefly offered with all Humillity. It is no small Addition to the Grief of the Afflicted, that when they propose their Humble Complaints, and produce their modest reasons against these kind of Severities, they are presently assaulted with a new kind of Persecution, by a parcel of cruel and unmerciful Pamphleters, who make it no less then an Arraignment of the State, and a Murmuring against the Government: In Return to which uncharitable Calumny I offer a few considerations.

1. 'Tis an easy thing for those Masters of the Faculty to Bugbear the Government with aggravated *Hyperboles*, and overstretch'd *Paraphrases*; 'Tis the very Nature of misery to complain, and I never knew that the Person complained to (if of a Noble and Heroick mind,) Interpreted the Petitioners Request at this Rate. The Poor Beggars crying for Relief, is no Arraignment of the Donors Charity. The Subjects Complaint of Grievance is no Impeachment of his Princes Justice. Our most Importunate Prayers to Almighty God, are no Arraignment of Infinite Mercy; no more are the Dissenters applications to a Prince of such Clemency as his Majesty is, justly to be so represented, neither does he in his Royal Judgment so esteem it.

2. It is Universally known that our Gracious King (whom God long Preserve) is a Prince of such Natural Clemency, and of so merciful a disposition, that he is much more apt to Pardon the Delinquent, then oppress the Innocent, and therefore his Protestant Subjects are very well satisfied in his Royal Expressions in a Proclamation Dated April 8. 1681, viz. *We will both in and out of Parliament use our utmost endeavour to extirpate Popery, and to redress all the Grievances of our Good Subjects, and in all things Govern according to the Laws of the Kingdom.* The Pious Temper of our most Illustrious Sovereign is Remarkable, in a Speech to both Houses, Monday Feb. 10. 1667. where he says, *One thing more I hold my self obliged to recommend unto you at this present; which is, that you would seriously think of some Course to beget a better Union and Composure in the minds of my Protestant Subjects in matters of Religion, whereby they may be Induced, not only to submit quietly to the Government, but also chearfully give their Assistance to the support of it.*

This evidently demonstrates that his Majesty considers that Christianity is full of Mercy, and that Christ the Glorious Author of it, is a Reconciler and Mediator, and therefore would have his Subjects disputed, or Preach'd into Church, not Worry'd, Jayl'd, Plunder'd, and Church-curs'd into Conformity.

I cannot leave this Royal-Text, till I have noted, that where-as his Majesty expresses the ends of this Composure and Union, viz. 1. A quiet Submission to the Government, and 2. a chearful assistance to support it; No Subjects of equal Quality have out-done the Dissenters in either of these. For,

1. As to matter of Fact, no Treasons, Rebellions, or Insurrections, (no not a Shaddow of any such things) can be justly chargeable upon them, since his Majesties Happy Restauration. All the Spys and Eagle-Ey'd Observators that have been Employ'd to watch them, can't produce so much as a probable Circumstance of any Conspiracy amongst them against the Government, and to be sure, had there been any such thing, the Nation e're this would have Ring'd of it. Some few half-penny Scriblers rant at 'um, and in Spight of the Act of Oblivion, Revive what the Supream Authority commands to be forgotten; But of that and the Single Freak of *Venner*, more hereafter.

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2. As to the Probability of the thing, viz. That any such Conspiracy should be Contrived by *Dissenting-Professants*, the Persons that so think, must suppose them meer Fools and Mad-men: For as things stand, they must first forfeit their Reason, before they can abandon their Allegiance. They are not so silly; whatsoever others think of them, but that they very well understand they hold their Lives, as well as their Religion by no other Tenure than his Majesties Life. And therefore it is their great concern, as they tender all that's dear and near to them, to preserve his Person and Government, and Defend both with their Lives and Fortunes. And I am confident that the whole Party of the Dissenters, (though in some little things differing from each other) would Universally and Uniformly agree, to Sacrifice their All in his Majesties Service, against any power whatsoever that should oppose him:

The Universal experience of unbiass'd Mankind can Witness the Truth of what is here said. Yet I know very well, what objections have been and will be made from that dismal Topick of the Nations late Unhappy Convulsions. But that must be referred to a Distinct head.

In the second place, It is certain that (these *Protestant-Subjects* his Majesty intends, namely) the Dissenters have chearfully given their Assistance to the support of the Government. It is well known that they are an Industrious Trading People, that willingly pay whatsoever Taxes the Law requires. And it is Remarkable, that no People ever express a greater Zeal to oppose the various attaques of a Forreign (Anti-Spiritual Power) then these Dissenters: And could I know any one of them that would shrink from his Princes Service, when his Royal Person and Government are menaced, I would esteem him not only a Fool; but a Traytor to boot.

To Evidence (further) the Lenity of his Majesty, I shall quote a Memorable passage in his Declaration from Breda, Dated April 14. 1660. *We do declare a Liberty to Tender Consciences; and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of Opinion in matters of Religion, which do not disturb the Peace of the Kingdom; And that we shall be ready to Consent to such an Act of Parliament, as upon mature Deliberation shall be offered to us for the full Granting that Indulgence.*

What can be more Pious and Consonant to the Rules of the Gospel, then what this Great Monarch here declares? No Person is excepted from his Royal-Indulgence, but such as disturb the Peace of the Kingdom. Now if there be any such among the Dissenters, let them be severely Punished: But if there be none, I cannot but wonder at the Cruelty and undutifulness of such as Prosecute their Peaceable and Innocent *Fellow-Subjects* against the mind of their Sovereign.

His Majesty has not only declared this (so Favourable) Indulgence, but also by his own experience declares the unfruitfulness of Compulsion, *March 15th. 1671.* In these words, *Our Care and endeavours for the Preservation of the Rights and Interests of the Church, have been sufficiently Manifested to the World, by the whole Course of our Government, since our Happy Restoration, and by the many frequent ways of Coercion that we have used for the reducing all erring or Dissenting Persons, and for Composing the unhappy Differences in matters of Religion which we found among our Subjects upon our Return: But it being Evident by the sad Experience of Twelve years, that there is very little Fruit of all those Forceable Courses, we think our Self obliged to make use of that Supreme Power in Ecclesiastical matters, which is not only Inherent in us, but hath been declared and Recognized to be so by several Statutes and Acts of Parliament, &c.*

That August part of the Legislative power, the House of Commons, Resolved *Janu. 10. 1680,* *That it is the opinion of this House, that the Prosecution of Protestant Dissenters upon the Penal-Laws, is at this time Grievous to the Subject, a Weakening the Protestant Interest, an Incongruement to Popery, and dangerous to the Peace of the Kingdom.*

Besides this, there was a Bill past both Houses at the last Parliament in *Westminster*, for the Repeal of the 35 of *Elizabeth*, but through some unhappy neglect it was not presented to his Majesty, who doubtless would have past it. Nevertheless by that and what's mentioned before, we may clearly infer that the King and Parliament, judge that Compulsion of Conscience (of Peaceable Protestant Dissenters) is both unreasonable and unprofitable. And if I have the whole Legislative Authority on my side, *viz. King, Lords, and Commons,* (that is all *England*) I may modestly presume, that no Protestant will be angry at this Essay, nor censure it of

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Arrogance; it being so conformable to the Sentiments of the most Illustrious in the Nation: I must confess that there are Laws in force against the Dissenters which we shall a little Discourse of hereafter, and evidence plainly that the intention of the *Legislators* was to punish such as they supposed would be Seditious or dangerous to the Government, and they that stretch these Laws to destroy so many Innocent Peaceable Members of the Common-Wealth, do but Fight against God, and pervert the meaning of the Lawgivers; and can (at long run) expect no other Fruit of their officiousness, then what is reap'd by such as are unmerciful (to say no more) at the great and general Tribunal. Here you see those very Laws repealed, in *vote*, by them that made it; and though that does not disannul them, yet let me tell you, that for some particular Justices of the Peace, meerly upon the Information of a sort of Creatures called Informers, (whose Character in a few words I'll give you e're long) to Execute the utmost, yea, more then the utmost Severity of the Laws, against Dissenters, in defiance of the sense of the Law-makers, who did undoubtedly know what was best for us, is no less then to oppose a private Opinion to a publick Deliberation, and a private Spirit against a publick. But I'll proceed to my main business; and refer the Opinion (with a respect to this matter) of *as Great Statesmen as England ever knew to another place.*

## SECT. II.

**H**E that will Seriously consider how tenderly the Lord Jesus Recommends the precepts of mutual Love, to all that profess his Name, making it the very Character of his Followers, *Luk. 13. 35. By this shall all Men know that you are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another*; And how highly the Apostle Paul exalts the same Duty, reducing the whole Duty of a Christian to a single precept, *Gal. 5. 14. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour as thy self.* See *Levit. 19. 18. Mar. 22. 39.* Cannot but sufficiently wonder, to see such as profess the Christian Religion Quarrel one with another, upon the account of special and doubtful Circumstances, respecting Divine Worship!

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It is Lamentable to see how much the present Age differs from Primitive Christianity! The Servants of the Living God in those times, would rather have given their own Lives to persuade their Enemies to Piety, then seek to undo their Brethren, to force them to Hypocrisie.

Those Maximes that interfere with the Sacred Rules of the Gospel, and threaten desolation to Men for what they cannot help, are undoubtedly to be laid aside in a Christian Common-Wealth. And I question not but that our Gracious King, when he thinks fit to meet his People in *Parliament*, will order a Regulation of these proceedings, suitable to his Beneign and merciful temper before expressed.

In the mean time I humbly crave leave to offer a few general Reasons against the present Prosecutions, which my Zeal for Truth and the management of Church-Wars (like Christians indeed) extort from me.

It is notorious by Universal Experience that it is the perverse Nature of Man, *Nisi in vetitum*, to long (like Eve) for what is forbidden; A Malady derived by an uninterpreted succession from our first Parents. Hence grew a necessity of Establishing Laws and Civil Sanctions, the end of which are, to restrain and Punish Transgressors, who by the Intemperate Sallys of private or publick Ambition, Revenge, Lust or other Vice, attempt or actually perpetrate any thing Injurious to their Fellow-Creatures.

These Laws are Calculated for the respective *Meridians* of several Nations and Governments, and Levell'd against the prevailing vice of the place, *Ex malis moribus bone leges natae sunt*: The pravity of Mans Nature, caused a necessity of Laws, as Distempers do of Physick. And as the Office of the *later*, is to preserve the Health, and Cure the Diseases of the Body; so the Office of the *former* is to preserve the Body Politick. Neither of these are so limited, but that the private or publick Physick may be altered according as the Symptoms of the Disease direct the Application. And so we see that *Parliaments* (without any disparagement to their Wisdoms) *Repeal* Laws proper to the times they were Enacted in, and make New, as the Vicissitudes of the Publick Pulse stands in need of. The wisest Men have changed Counsels and Resolves upon Second thoughts: The very *Popes* themselves, and *General Councils* have done it, though the *former* Arrogate to themselves an Infallibility. No

No meer Man is so sharp sighted as certainly to foresee what the Events and Revolutions of things to come may be, without Divine Inspiration. Therefore it is rather to be Esteemed a prudential Skill, then an Arraignment of the Acts of our Predecessors, when what was suitable to them, and improper for us, are repealed, and a more seasonable remedy Applied, when the inconveniences of the former are discovered. I am certain that the best way to convince Protestant dissenters, (and most agreeable to the Dictates of Christianity,) is to Win them by fair and Charitable Methods; and that those Penalties the Law inflicts, should at least be relaxt, for Reasons hereafter to be produced. Every considering Man must needs know that the Bias of Interest and Education are strong Shackles to the Judgment, which Fetter it from yeilding to Demonstrated Truth. That of Education is very hard to be over-master'd. We have had Deplorable Experiments, that Opinion meerly got by Education, is sometimes as hard to be removed, (yea harder) then the Body from the Soul. It so Wheels and Intoxicates the Brain, that even amongst the *Turks*, we Read of some Wise and Moderate Persons, who would Die to maintain their ridiculous *Alcoran*.

Custom is grown such a Tyrant, that some would rather starve then eat Bread bak'd in a Pan (as a Reverend Prelate said) because he used to eat Bread bak'd in an Oven. Religion in many is really their humour, and a Darling Fancy passes with such for Reason; and Fashion is more prevailing then the best Arguments. O the Deplorable Estate of Christianity: Men will now reject the most Sacred of Truths, if they can but find a *Pique* at the Messenger, as if the Raving Patient would spill the best of Cordials, because not presented in a Golden Spoon!

The Design of what is said, is to make way for what follows, viz.

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## S E C T. III.

*Demonstrative Reasons against Compulsion of Conscience.*

**N**O Humane Authority, no not the very *Popes* (those Infallible Tooles) can deny but that *the Word of God is the Rule of Faith*, to which all that profess the Name of Christ ought to Conform. And as all the Children of God have an Equal Interest in the Testament of their Father, so no one amongst them, has any Privilege to impose a force upon the Judgment of his Brother. One holds *this*, the other *that*, a third denies *both*, they Examine Scripture, Consult the Originals, Examine the Opinions of Antiquity; they sincerely Pray for Illumination: What then? Why pray what Court will you take with your Dissenting Brother? All that you can say, can't remove him from his former persuasion: The best way is to pray for him, if any Rigorous course be taken in such a Case, and if the fire brings no light with it to Demonstrate the Truth of it, I profess I cannot but suspect that the Coals are fetcht from below.

He that reflects upon the difficulties that Encounter us in the way to Truth, for *Strait is the Gate, and Narrow is the Way*, and with all considers how short sighted the best of Men be, for *have we see but in Part, and understand but in Part*, will soon find that there is infinitely more Reason for Christians mutually to Endeavour the support and assistance, rather than study the Ruine and Destruction of each other.

Since all have neither an equal Depth of Natural Judgment, nor the same Measure of Supernatural Illumination, but *the Spirit Bloweth how, and where it pleaseth*, we ought not to despise or Persecute our Brother, for his Innocent and blameless mistakes, least we be found to fight against God, who is the free disposer of his Gifts; we know *the way of Man is not in himself*, Jer. 10. 23. But his goings (or steps) are of the Lord, Pro. 20. 24. And therefore, did we bear a due Respect to God, we would be Content

to.



to wait his leisure, who has engaged himself by his Apostle, Phil. 3. 15. *If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.* Let us therefore entertain such a one, (who proceeds in the simplicity of his heart,) with *Milk*, till he grow stronger to Digest *Strong-Meat*.

I am much mistaken, if *Compulsion of Conscience* borders not upon the very Shirts of the Implicate Faith of the *Papists*. For, whatsoever a man is constrained to Swear, or profess, more then he is convinced of, proceeds from us Blind an allent, as can be match'd in the grossest *Popery*, and of such a convert no profession has any great cause to boast. For common Reason tells us, that such as are Profelyted by violence, will continue such no longer then the force lasts.

Force is meer Punishment, and consequently not Just, unless the offence be voluntary: But he that believes according to the evidence of his own Reason, is necessitated to that belief, and to compel him from it, is to drive him to Renounce the Essential part of Man, his Reason.

I can't Imagine why we should be commanded to try the Spirits, 1. John 4. 1. And to prove all things. 1 Thes. 5. 21. *If there be not a Faculty in the Soul to judge for it self.* 'Tis a strange Injunction when we are commanded to hold fast that which we find to be best; if after our most serious and deliberate Election, we shall be whipt out of our Conscience by Penaltys. To what purpose do we Preach poor Souls into just so much Liberty of Scripture, as may beget their torture, and not permit them to rest where they find satisfaction? Either prohibit to search at all, or leave us sensible of some benefit by teaching. To believe what seems untrue, seems to me Impossible; To profess what we believe untrue, I am sure is damnable.

As 'tis certain, that whosoever swerves from the Dictates of his own Conscience, commits a grievous Sin, Rom. 14. So without Question they that endeavour by Force or Artifice to draw any Man to profess or Act contrary to what his Soul believes, are as deeply guilty of the same Crime, as the Apostle says, *When ye wound the weak Consciences of your Brethren, ye Sin against Christ.* 1 Cor. 8. 12. How dangerously then do they expose themselves to the Just Indignation of God who drive others, (and fall themselves) into this Evil? &c. How wilfully do they attempt to extin-

with the Light of Nature, which Indispensably obliges all Men to Deal with others, as they would be dealt with themselves? This Light is placed by God in clear and candid Souls to Shine and guide them, but in black ones to condemn and burn them. I could heartily wish that all Men would take the Advice of the Apostle, Rom. 14. 13. *Let us not therefore Judge one another any more: But Judge this rather, that no man put a Stumbling-Block, or an occasion to fall, in his Brothers way.* If this Blessed Counsel were but followed, what a happy Nation might ours be?

Nothing hath caused more mischief in the Church then the Establishing new (and many) Articles of Faith, and the Incumbance of Gods Worship by Ceremonys, which all acknowledge to be more for Ornament, then any Essential necessity. And had these Stumbling-Blocks been removed, 'tis certain that our too too deplorable divisions would in a great measure vanish, but since there are, and must be Divisions, let us pray to the Physitian of Souls to heal them. *To Love one another* is a command of the Almighty, which never was, nor never will be repealed. And O! how disagreeable to that Sacred precept is it, to vex and trouble each other! How rare is it to see the very *Brutes* prey upon their kind! Yet we see mankind destroy mankind, not only devesting themselves of humanity, but with a more then Brutish cruelty, rage against their very Brethren. To break so evident a Commandement, to establish that which is (more then) doubtful, is certainly contrary to Gospel-Laws.

A thing may be clear to one man that would fain impose it, but it may be doubtful to him on whom it is imposed, which no Body can help. Must the doubtful Person be knockt o'the head therefore, or must we pick out the Eyes of all that cannot See as well as our selves.

Suppose the point be clear in Scripture; why then say I, there is no necessity to make a new Law to Impose it; much less a new Article of Faith. If it be but deduc'd or infer'd; 'tis certain that what one thinks clearly deduced, another as Learned and able as he, may think not to be so.

Mens understandings are as various as their Speech or Faces: And is it Just for one man to Quarrel with another, because different from him in either of these? or put him upon a Rack to stretch him to his own dimension, if not so tall as he? He that  
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thinks all Dissenters either maliciously or wilfully Blind is (in my Judgment) defective in Charity. If these People Dissent out of Humour, or Hypocrisie, every thinking Man will pronounce them absolute Fools. For they that play the Hypocrites, do it either for Worldly ends, or vain glory. Now these Men, who are under the lash of every Informer, and suffer so unmercifully; cannot be charg'd with Dissenting for worldly ends, because they may secure themselves by Conformity, and by necessary consequence their Nonconformity is out of pure Conscience. Else, (as was said) they are stark Ideots, and if so, the State has no need to fear them, and it would be a great disparagement to so wise and Illustrious a Government to seem to fear such a Company of supposed simpletons. But then on the other hand, if their Dissent be really from the strong and convinced perswasions of their minds, I would in all humility beseech all, that have power to Execute the Laws against them, to consider, that they are Christians, their Bretheren and Countrymen, and that they would treat them as such; in agreement to what our merciful Prince declared, as before, *viz. To Punish only such as are disturbers of the Government.* For my Pen shall never be an Advocate for any Person of that Character. If any should think that these Men Dissent out of *vain Glory*, he must still suppose them worse Fools then before; For who but a Mad-man would purchase the applause of a few Persons (an Idle airey thing that will neither Feed nor Cloath him) at the dear rate of 20*l.* a Month, 20*l.* a Sermon, &c. or a Prison with all its tormenting apurtenances? Is this a comfortable Bargain?

Well then, supposing them weak Brethren, what shall we do with them? why the *Apostle* readily answers this question, *Rom. 14. 1. Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.* Here is not one word of sending him to Prison, or Fining of him; No, No, they us'd to perswade and convince, not compel men to Conformity. Neither did the strong Christian Persecute, but Cherish and Instruct his weak Brother. For,

They very well knew that no man can be forced to believe, he may ('tis true) be compelled to say this or that, but not to believe it; the Dominion over the External part has no Rule over the Soul. And though a Man may be compell'd to dissemble his thoughts, it is impossible that any outward force can change the opinion. The Soul of man is a thing so generous, that it is rather

rather perswaded by mildness, then won upon by rigorous and Coercive Methods. And the Nature of Christianity, is really adapted for such procedures. If *Compulsion of Conscience* had been thought by the Almighty, to be the best way of reducing Mankind, our Lord Jesus would have used it. He that had the Command of the whole Heavenly Militia, (one of which in a Night Slew 185000 of the *Assyrian Host*) could with as much ease subdue the Great *Augustus Caesar*, as command a Fish to bring him the Tribute Money.

He that has good Eyes, and has been taught to Read, will Read you a clear Printed Book, but if he be Blind, or having Eyes wants Light, or never learnt to Read, or if the Print be Blind, you may sooner dash out his Brains with a Club, then make him perform an Action he cannot.

Faith is not to be driven like a Nail into the Head, or Heart, with a Hammer: For a Man cannot believe if he would, till the Gift be bestowed upon him. And the Scripture is plain, when it tells us, *that Faith is the Gift of God*.

Arguments are good Inducements, but force has no countenance in the Gospel, much less a command. Pray peruse these Texts, *John 20. 31. 5. 39. 2 Tim. 3. 15. Deut. 12. 32.* 'Tis an easy thing to pick out ones Eyes, but all the Art of Man cannot restore those Eyes again, or make Eyes for one Born without them. Even so *Compulsion* can make a Man a Hypocrite, but all the severity in the World cannot make him a true Convert.

If Reason understands not what is declared, how can we by way of Deduction, or the best framed Syllogisms yield to what we apprehend not to be Demonstrative? All discourse and Ratiocination ought to be of things Intelligible; The object of Faith is purely and essentially Divine, and the Soul cannot arrive at that (Best of) Learning, till the Spirit of God becomes the Tutor.

Before I leave this (by way of digression) I cannot but borrow a few excellent Notions of an Eminent Prelate now Living. 'There is no giving way to Rational deduction and human Argumentations against Scripture, for then a cunning *Sophister* may lead men into many Errors. To go about to prove by Reason such things as are above Reason, is wonderful: And to discourse of what we understand not, is a spice of madness. The Conclusions drawn from such Discourses are dangerous, yea,  
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\* *A meer Ignis fatuus* that misguides Men, *2 Tim. 2. 13.* Divine Myſteries dreſt up in the attire of meer humane Oratory, is like a chaſt and Vertuous Matron, trickt up in the habit of a Curtezan. The Divine Subſtance is not expreſſible by human Rhetorick, nor the moſt delicate Flouriſhes of an Artificial Pencil.

That which Men call School-Divinity, has been perverted as ſuch a Rare, that it has prov'd a meer Plague to Chriſtianity. There you have new Queſtions, nice Diſtinctions, and intemperate Concluſions toſt up and down like Tennis Balls. And from thence proceed cruel Bickerings, and Theological Wars.

The firſt Divinity-School was ſet up at *Alexandria* by *Pantenus*, and from thence Sprung the *Arrian-Hereſie*, which like an ill weed ſoon overran all Chriſtendom. In the Subtilty of theſe Schools Hereſie grew Refined, and with their School tricks of diſtinctions and Eviſions, almoſt baffled the plain and ſimple Profeſſors of the Goſpel.

The Primitive Doctors, converted from Heatheniſm, and well ſhild in *Philophy*, *Antiquity*, *Hiſtory*, and *Logick* or *Sophiſtry*, Tranſlated theſe Sciences (faſly ſo called) into Chriſtianity, to Illuſtrate by their Indiſcreet Zeal, and Imbelliſh Chriſtian knowledge, by Artificial Forms and Figures, but rather indeed defaced it. *Col. 2. 8.*

He that ſeriouſly and without prepoſſeſſion conſiders the Nature of Chriſtian Doctrin, will conclude, that it muſt be taught by the Demonſtration of the Spirit and Power, and not by the School harangues of *Sophiſtical Syllogiſms* and *Enthymems*.

Conſidering Men are wary, (and ſo they had need) of the Subtilties of ſuch as would pervert or deceive them, in ſo important a matter as Religion is: Becauſe Hereſies appear not firſt in their own Natural Shape, but they complement you in Diſguiſe, *Maſqueraded* with ſpecious pretences; the Author of theſe Hereſies will preſs into their Service, this and that obſcure place of Scripture capable of various Interpretations. But (mark I pray) when they have once got Footing, by degrees they lay a ſide their Vizards, and march on Brazen-Fac'd, (I mean bare-Fac'd.)

Well, but as to *Compulſion of Conſcience*, ſince the affront is only to the Divine Maieſty, ſuppoſing the Diſſenter errs, methinks we ſhould leave God to vindicate his own cauſe: For what can be

be a greater disparagement or more derogatory to the honour of the Godhead, then to think he wants the help of Man to defend him. Mark how *Peter* was rebuked by our Saviour for cutting off *Malchus* his Ear. Besides, do but consider the Methods used by the Redeemer of the World, in Conquering his Enemies, and you will find it was by Preaching and Suffering, and if his Disciples wont follow so illustrious an Example, they deserve not to be called by his Name, nor be Dignified with the Title of Christians.

In all well order'd Governments the Magistrate may and ought to punish Evil doers, but not Evil Believers, for God Reserves that to himself, it is his Divine Perogative, for he only is the Heart searcher; and Man cannot possibly have a right Cognizance of the concealed or Evil thoughts of another; because, for any thing he knows, *The greatest Professor may be the greatest Atheist.*

I do not Remember that Christians ever took up Arms against their Governours in the Primitive times for propagating their Profession, or to preserve themselves from Persecution; And he that will do so, merely upon that account, is either a Fool or an Atheist: A Fool, because he rejects the opportunity of gaining the Reward promised, *Matth. 5. 12. Blessed are ye when Men Revile you and Persecute you, &c.* Or an Atheist, because he wont believe that God will be as good as his word. But to Return where I left, I may reckon that common saying among shallow Fancys, viz. *That a Pigmy on a Gyants Shoulders sees more then the Giant.* The Question is not of seeing more, but clear discerning. If both these see a Beast at a Miles distance, and contend whether it be a Horse or an Oxe, the Pigmy on the Gyants Shoulder, is never the nearer discerning what it is, because it depends more upon the sharpness of Sight, then the height of his shoulders: so we have no possible assurance that the Doctrine delivered to us by man (if not revealed in Scripture) is absolutely true, because we are certainly assured that 'tis possible for him, or any man to erre, yea in this very Doctrine. The Great *Augustine* (the wonder of his time for sharpness of understanding, and great modesty withal,) believed it absolutely necessary that Infants should Receive the *Lords-Supper*, and termed it a down-right *Herésie* to affirm that there were any *Antipodes*. So *Lanfrancus* a notable Wit, and a great Scholar.

The most Eminent of the Evangelical Doctors grant that even general Councils have erred, and if any man should deny it, the thing may be easily Demonstrated. Our Church Histories declare how often they have thwarted one another, in things (point blank) contradictory. At which we need not wonder, for they have no promise of Infallibility; You'll say they are the Churches *Representative*: What then? I know no promise in the whole Bible, that the Representative should be Infallible. 'Tis true *The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church*, but what's that to a General Council which (by a modest Calculation) cannot amount to one part in 10000 of the Universal Church. But I need say no more, then that these (so called) general Councils have been *ex diametro* against each other, as before hinted.

Parents are accountable to God for their commands, as well as the Children are for their Obedience, natural Parents are by meer Nature prompted to seek the Love of their Children: So ought Spiritual Parents who are Stiled *Ministers of God* (who is Love) to demean themselves towards their Spiritual Children. And consequently is it not more suitable to this excellent *Grace*, and Parental Tenderness to lead the People into the House of God, rather then to whip them in by fear? And to put on such a habbit as will Invite them in, rather then fright them out? What wise and Loving Father would put on a winding Sheet to Fright his weak and simple Child?

Man (says a Reverend Pen) is a very ticklish Animal to Govern; he will not always be guided by Reason and Authority. He has a *Will* as well as *Reason*, and will have his own *Will* in many things; even among the very Godly themselves (which is to be Lamented) but few are so insively Pious, as wholly to deny themselves. This is so high and sharp a point of Religion, that you may break the Heart strings of many in winding them up so high; and so you may crack all their Religion.

I cannot in Conscience when I Treat upon so serious a Theme, but Remark, that the Carriage of some Preachers has created a great dislike of that Sacred Work, as 'tis managed by not a few, and so are themselves the causers of that Dissent, which they exclaim against: too many Preach not Christ but themselves; They take here and there a Sentence of Scripture, the shorter and more abusive the better. Then to shew their Skill and Invention, they

Divide and Subdivide it into Generals and Particulars. Here you have the *Quid*, the *Quale*, the *Quantum*, and such like *Quack* *Saving* Forms, which the People understand no more then they do Greek or Latine. Then they look into this or that quaint Author and pick out a Sentence of a *Philosopher* or Father, some nice Speculation or other, and Labour to couch all in Elegant Language. But what's the end of this? why certainly 'tis merely to shew their Wit, Reading, or whatsoever else is excellent in them. But, Pray mark, how such practises are Charactered, 1 Cor. 2. the whole Chapter is worth Reading, and plainly demonstrates that this kind of Preaching is not Apostolick, that is, that they Preach not in the Demonstration of the Spirit, but in the Demonstration of their Learning.

Many of the Ancient Fathers (especially the *Greeks*) have been ever Fond of Nicety. These, when Converted to Christianity, Transplanted their Beloved Rhetorical Flowers of humane Learning into Christian Gardens, which proy'd indeed Weeds: Common Experience will be my Advocate, when I say that humane Nature is apter to give Nourishment and vigour to humane Principles then to such as are Divine.

Pray when did ever any Learned, Witty, Rhetorical Harangue, or cunning Syllogistical Discourse convert the tenth part of St. Peters or St. Pauls Foolish Preaching, as he terms it? (tho 'tis indeed the *Wisdom of God to them that are Perseverant*.)

How widely different is the manner of Preaching in the Apostles time from Philosophical Arguing, and Rhetorical declaiming? the Preaching then, was either Catechistical Instructions, or Pious admonitions, not tying themselves to any form; but pass from one matter to another, as the condition of the Hearers required, and not as the Preachers Fancy and Reading prompted him.

'Tis Reported of the Emperour *Caligula*, that he Judged, Condemned or acquitted Delinquents as best agreed with the Current of his Oration; So some now a days shape their Discourse more to the Applause, then Edification of the Hearers. Such Sermons may be better termed Banquets for full wantons, then Instructions for such as are almost Starved for want of Spiritual Food. It may nourish an Auditory of *Camelions* that Live by Air, but can never make sound and Solid Christians.

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The *Schoolmen*, and such as greedily Suck their unexamined Dictates, have set up an opinion, that none are fit to Preach but such as have been Students in the University; Where if he hath Learnt a little to chop *Logick*, and produce some nice Speculations from *Aristotle*, *Plato*, &c. or some *Theological* distinctions from *Aquinas*, *Peter Lombard*, or the rest of the distinction-makers, or a little gingling from the *Poets* and *Orators*, then, O! then, (but you must suppose him documented by the *Guide to the Inferiour Clergy*) he sets up for a Spiritual Pastor! the weightiest Office in the world, because Mens Souls, (their better part) is concern'd! 'tis very strange that such qualifications (common to Graceless as well as Gracious Schollars) should render him capable of *rightly Dividing the word of Truth*: For if you seriously Examine the whole New-Testament, you will not find one title of those Sciences in the Gospel; but you will see they are rather severely arraigned, as Enemys to it; Because they tend to *vain Jangling, Strife, and Contention*, not tending to that (which is the end of Preaching) the *Conversion and Edification* of Souls, *Eph. 6. 32. 2. Cor. 10. 4.*

The Apostle *Paul* in his Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus* (two Primitive Bishops,) tells you the qualifications of Bishops and Deacons, viz. *Gravity, Sobriety, Meekness, Diligence, &c.* Not *Mathematicks, Logick, Physick, &c.* Not the Study of *Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Euclid, Scorus, Aquinas, &c.* And why? why there is very good Reason: For 'tis most evident that the greatest part of Academical Learning is as useless to a Spiritual Pastor, as the Art of *Navigation* is to a *Physician*: The Apostle telling us in plain terms, that he desired *To know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him Crucified*. There's the qualification with which whosoever is qualified, may say with *David*, *Come I will shew thee what the Lord hath done for my Soul*. But without it all the Arts in the World can't make a Preacher, as the old verse says.

*Qui Christum discit, satis est, si Cetera Nescit.*

*Qui Christum nescit, nihil est, si Cetera Discit.*

Christ may be better Preach'd by a Grave, Conscientious Man, well versed in the Scriptures, and the Mysterys of Faith, tho never bred in any University, nor skill'd in any Language but his Mother-Tongue, then by the Students of *Aristotle, Scorus, Aquinas, &c.* (*quas ales*) with all their knacks of *Quidditys* and *Quali-*

*Metaphors, Syllogisms, and Enthymeres, Distinctions, and Subsumptions, &c.* It is Remarkable, that no *Greek, Italian, or French* of a thousand understood any Language besides his *Mother-Tongue*, when the Gospel first was Planted. And 'tis worth noting, that the Apostles received the Gift of Tongues, because they were to Preach to all Nations, but we find no infusion of School-Learning by the Holy-Ghost, nor any more Gift of Tongues, when the Gospel was once spread over the World.

This is further very Remarkable that no Man can produce an Example of any Nation that was ever Converted to Christianity by *Philosophical or Rhetorical Preaching*.

I hope the Digression will be excused, if I note the mischief of Excursions; For if such be countenanced, we shall never have an end: because the Itch Men have to shew their Learning, will continue this vain and unedifying Practice. Possibly the Preacher sits in his Study all the week long, picking from this and that and other quaint-Author, a few Beautiful Flowers; well; what then? then he comes on the Preaching day (commonly called *Sunday*) with his Nosegay in his Hand (*viz.* his Notes pin'd upon his Bible) to entertain Ladys and Courtiers. But what have you to say to that? I'll say nothing, but refer the Reader to the *New-Testament*, and when he has seriously perus'd it, let him Act and Believe (with respect to the Premises,) as that Sacred Book plainly Teaches him; for if that won't do, nothing but a Miracle will do in a *Booby*.

Before I proceed, give me leave (*good Reader*) to tell you, that by what I have here written, (partly from Persons Eminent in our Church of *England*, and partly from my own experience and observation) I would not be understood to cry down humane Learning, as a thing of no use; nor throw the least disparagement upon our Famous and Reverend Divines, for I honour them from my Heart, and know that amongst the Clergy of the Church of *England*, (as Established by Law,) there are as Eminent Men, Conspicuous to all, not only for their Learning, but also for their Piety and Gracious Conversations, and their painful and Industrious Labours in the Service of our God, as any in the World: No, no, 'tis the Abuse only I write against, and 'tis that alone I heartily wish were Reformed.

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The knowledge of the Original Languages in which the Scriptures were Perus'd is of very great necessity; that we might converse with that Sacred Book in its own *Emphatical and Native Idiom*, and that we may not be imposed upon by wrong Translations. But withal let me add (which no Learned Man I am sure will blame me for, if unbyas'd) that we are to consider the Bounds of *Philosophy* and *Humane Literature*: These are to be exercis'd in the things that may be known by the Light of Natural Reason; But when they Travel beyond that Road, and must needs be defining things beyond their Sphere, they become extravagant and Saucy.

This was the Judgment of that Excellent and Learned Lord *Picus* Earl of *Mirandola*, in his Epistle to *Silvius Adrianus*, a famous Scholar: *Accinge, te ad Philosophiam, sed hoc Reges, ut Aristoteli nullam esse Philosophiam quæ a Myſteriorum obscuritate non abſtineat: Philosophia veritatem quærit, Theologia Invenit, Religio possidet.* That is, *Address your self so to the Study of Philosophy, that no Philosophy should seduce you from the Truth of the Myſterys (of Christian Religion); Philosophy seeks Truth, Divinity finds it, (but) Religion possesses it.*

Every Thing is good and proper in its place; as for Example, *Fire* is useful in the Chimney, but it is mischievous in the House-Top. There, that which before would Warm you, or be Serviceable to Dress your Meat, will Burn you and your Meat; so unless you can quench it, it will burn away from it. So Learning is good as an *Hand-Maid*, *Hand-maid* like, But if it must needs be Mistress, and Usurp Authority in the Family, if like Scoffing *Ishmael* *Genesis* 21. 9. *Galat.* 4. 30. It will Mock at the Spirit, and the Simplicity of the Gospel; let it be cast out: For nothing Supream will endure to be Rival'd in his Authority. Perogative, especially in Divine matters, is as tender as the Apple of ones Eye.

There is no Sober and Impartial Divine, but will Grant; that it is the work of Faith, by the Aid of *Divine Revelation*, to be Employed in the Myſterys of Religion. From which concession it is evident, that when any Man undertakes to Teach us Divinity, by the meer Guidance of Nature, (call it Natural Philosophy, University Learning; or what you will,) but shews himself by such an attempt as absurd and Nonsens.

Nonfensical, as if the Eye should Inroach upon the Ear, and would pretend to Distinguish the various gradations of Musical Notes, or the quavers of a pleasant Instrument; which it cannot so much Imitate, as the dullest Brute can Imitate the warblings of the Nightingale.

If the Example and Practice of the Lord Jesus Christ be worth Imitating, you will find that he made Choice of such as were Despised and Unlearned. Why? Because his Grace might so much the more be Magnified, and that the Honour due to His Sovereign Converting Power might not be Attributed to any Humane Faculty of Rhetorical Perswasion. He made Fishermen, a Tent-maker, and other Tradesmen, Messengers of the Everlasting Gospel, and (as it were) Embassadors extraordinary of Heaven. They were not sent to Learn the Facultys of *Aristotle*, *Cicero*, or *Aquinas*: No no; His Holy Spirit was the only Schoolmaster. He could with as much ease employ the whole University of *Athens*, as those Poor Men; but he did not, and why such as are called by his Name should despise his Grace when appearing in Persons of that Quality he Chose, is a meer disconcurrence with the Sanctions of this Ever-Blessed *Law-Giver*.

I do not represent these things to Introduce a promiscuous Liberty for all Persons to turn Preachers that are Christians, but to Reason People (if I could) out of extreams. For as on the one Hand I believe that meer Learning does not qualifie a Man to be a Preacher, so on the other side I am satisfied, that Grace without the gift of *Utterance* and a *sound Judgment* accompanied with an Ability to *Divide the word of Truth*, suitable to the necessity of the Hearers, does not qualifie any Man for a Publick Preacher. Of both these I take the Church to be Judge, and am satisfied that without the Approbation of a Christian Assembly, such as presume to take that Office upon them, where such an Approbation may be had, are none of Christs Messengers but their own, Because we shall so have no order, but confusion, which must not be Introduced into the Church of Christ, unless you will change the best of *Governments*, into the worst of *Anarchys*. Let every Man abide in the Calling wherunto he is called, says the Evangelical unrepeable Statute.

It has been (and will be till reformed) the Reproach of Christianity, that *Preachers* have err'd on both Extremes; some talk Nonſenſe, ſome talk above common-Senſe. I have (ſaies one of our *Prelates*) ſeen ſome Learned Men call Children together, and ask them a few Questions; and then to begin a Proſound Lecture, ſhaped according to his own large Dimensions, at whom Boys and Mengaze at, as a prodigious Monster of Learning: ſome ſaying as *Festus* to *Paul*, *Much Learning hath made him Mad.* Sure he knows not where he is, why, he is not in a University School of Divinity, but in an Aſſembly of weak and ſilly Youth, who underſtand his *Engliſh*, no more than *Hebrew*.

He adds, If Men would mark the form and phraſe of the Goſpel, and what kind of Matter and Language the Divine Oracle uſed in Preaching, even to the Learned *Scribes* and *Phariſees*; and read 1 *Cor.* 1. and the beginning of the ſecond, it would inform them what Language that is, that's Cloathed in ſuch Meretricious Attire, &c. *Hæc Ille.*

The Scope and Intention of this Digreſſion, is to ſhew how this Sacred Office of Preaching is abuſed, and of what Influence that Abufe is to ſcare people away, who love to underſtand, and profit by what they hear; And ſo I ſhall conclude this *Section* in imitation of a late Ingenious *Author* (tho' not in his very words) That if there be not ſuch a parcel of things as call themſelves *Preachers* that Act thus, then no body is concern'd in this Character; but if there be, the Abufe is worth looking after, in order to Reformation, if not Punishment, of ſo great a Spiritual Grievance.

## S E C T. V.

### *Expreſs Scripture againſt Compulſion of Conſcience.*

THEſe Excellent and Important *Truths* mentioned, are not only built upon the firm Foundation of ſolid and unanſwerable Reason, but alſo upon the Infallible Authority of the Law, and Word of God. To convince you of which, pray be pleaſed to conſider the following Texts.

Hear what the Apoſtle *Paul* ſaies, 2 *Tim.* 2. 24. (mark that this *Epiſtle* is written to a *Biſhop*) *And the Servant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all Men; apt to Teach, Patient, (or longſuffering) Bearing.) ver.* 25. *In weakneſs inſtruiting thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure*

*will give them Repentance, to the acknowledging of their Sins ver. 26. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken Captive by him at his Will: no 21st) and 1. 2nd. 3rd. 4th. 5th. 6th.*

From this passage it is evident, that the Apostle forbids all rigorous Courses, even towards *Infidels*; and that he expressly sets down the right Christian Course of Convincing and Converting them, viz. By Charity and Meekness. And if Christians will make use of Church Curses, and Humane Laws, Enacted only against *Seditious* persons, and Disturbers of the Government, to force innocent Christians that agree with themselves, in the Essential Articles of Christianity, to Disputable Modes of Circumstantial Ceremonies, confest by all to be Humane Original; In my Opinion, they disagree with this Blessed Man, who after he Teaches the Bishop his Duty, advises him to leave the success to God; But not a syllable of Jayling, Imprisoning, or Fining them.

Another Apostle forbids us to Condemn one another. *James 4. 12. There is one Law-giver (saies he) who is able to save and to destroy: Who art thou that Judgest another? suitable to which (mark I pray) what the former Apostle saies. Rom. 14. 4. Who art thou that Judgest another Mans Servant? to his own Master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand. ver. 3. One Man esteemeth one Day above another: another esteemeth every Day a like. Let every Man be fully perswaded in his own mind. ver. 22. Hast thou Faith? have it to thy self before God. Happy is he that Condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. That is, whose Conscience accuseth not his outward Profession.*

This most zealous Preacher of the Gospel, returns to condescending and moderate an Answer to a Case of a far harder sound than is here maintained, which argues that he took his gentle Pen from the soft Wing of the Dove. *1 Cor. 7. 12. &c. If any Brother hath a Wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. ver. 13. And the Woman which hath a Husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. ver. 14. For the unbelieving Husband is sanctified to the believing Wife (viz. in a Matrimonial Correspondence.) And the unbelieving Wife is sanctified to the Husband, &c. ver. 15. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart; A Brother or a Sister is not in Bondage in such Cases: But God hath called us to Peace. ver. 16. For what knowest thou O Wife, whether thou shalt save thy Husband? Or how knowest thou O Man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife? ver. 17. But as God distributed to every Man, as the Lord hath called every one; so let him walk; and so Ordain I in all Churches.*

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Pray mark, good Reader, what can be said more Efficaciously to oblige Christians to Christian forbearance, than so plain an Injunction to live peaceably with meer Heathens. You may see moreover, that 2 Cor. 1. 24. He denies that even the Apostles themselves have any Sovereignty over the Conscience, but only Commissions to assist the Conscientious. — Not for that we have Dominion (saies he to the Corinthians) over your Faith, but are helpers of your Joy: For by Faith you stand. In this he exactly observes the Orders which Christ gave to his Apostles, Go and Teach, (not compel) Math. 28. 19. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that House or City, shake off the Dust of your Feet, as we find practised, *Act. 13. 51*. Mark, they are not commanded to trample upon them as Dust under their Feet; the Planters of Christian Religion had never any such Commission. If the people would not believe, they did e'en let them alone, with only that harmless Testimony that they had done their Duty, and left them to God. — O how widely different is this little Dust-shaking, which neither Kill'd nor Jay'd any body, from the Thunder-claps of *Possib. Bulls, Interdicts, Smithfield Flames, Imprisonments, Fines &c.* — Consonant to this Principle of Meekness, our Saviour himself instructed his Disciples, *Math. 23. 10*. Be not call'd Rabbi, (that is, superiors in Spiritual Matters, or Lords over the Conscience) For one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are Brethren. From these Texts Reader, infer what you can rationally, — for it were but to light a Candle to the Sun, for me to go about to Illustrate them.

I wonder what the Patient forbearing of the Tares means; and letting them grow together till the time of Harvest; Ay, and along with the Wheat too, till the Spiritual Reaper comes, — unless it be a Christian Toleration. I cannot fix any other Sense upon that *Scripture Parable*, but that we ought not to pluck up each other by the Roots, because we are not alike, — for it may happen that some of the very Wheat may be destroyed by Corn-Weeders. Therefore 'tis certainly the safest and soberest way to be quiet, and leave the management of the Spiritual Corn-Fields to the Lord of the Harvest, till he Order the contrary.

That admirable President of mildness towards the *Samaritans*, a Sorty Inhospitable sort of people, (that would not receive even Christ himself) is very Notable. The Disciples *James* and *John* would have them immediately Commanded down from Heaven to Consume them, as in the Days of *Elias*; but our Merciful God Rebuked their Zeal with this sweet and tender reply, *Luk. 9. 55, 56*. I know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: For

*the Son of Man is not come to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them.* This one Example abundantly satisfies all Objections drawn from the Practice of *Elias, Jehu, the Sons of Levi, &c.* in the *Old-Testament*; For as they had an Express Command from God to warrant their Zeal, we have an Express Warrant from Christ to Command Meekness.

If any one shall shuffle in a *suspicion* that this moderate temper was meant only for the Times of Persecution; when the Christians had no *temporal power*; let him first confess that these were the best and purest Times, and then shew a *Warrant Dormant* under our Saviour's hand (that is in his *Gospel*) to Commissionate his Disciples, as soon as they should get the Sword into their hands, to use the severity of Penal Laws against all disobeyers, and I submit. But if they can cite no such Authority, let them consider whether compulsion of Conscience is consistent with the just Liberties and Privileges of a Christian.

The *Church of England* approves not of *Donatism*, nor that *Romish Arrogance* which pronounces *All Dissenters damn'd*. No, no; 'tis evident both by publick Declarations, and the Writings and Preachings of many of the most Eminent *Church-men*, that Salvation is not tyed up here, to a meer Conformity to what the *English Church* differs in, from others; Of this we have a fresh and famous Instance in the *Charitable and Christian-like* entertainment given to the *French Protestants* that came hither for *Sanctuary*, from the present Persecution in their Native Country. This clearly manifests that our *Church* Quarrels not with the *Dissenting-Protestants*; For it would be a very strange Riddle, to entertain *Protestants* of the very same persuasion with so much tenderness and hospitality, and at the very same Instant, exact the utmost mire, that the Penal Laws require, from their *Protestant Country-men*, who disagree in nothing from these foreign Brethren, but only in Language (I mean with respect to *Articles of Religion*) so that he that will charge the present Prosecutions upon the *Church of England*, does charge her at one and the same time, with severity to our own Natives, and Charity to Strangers of the same Profession. Now, since it is not to be presumed that the *Church of England* would act with such Partiality and Contradiction, may we not rationally conclude, that this unreasonable Prosecution, (when *Papery* is watching all opportunities to Ruine *Conformists*, as well as *Nonconformists*) is to be charged only on some particular Self-seeking persons, or such as do not calmly consider what the Circumstances of things are?

The Judgment of His Majesty, and the Resolves of our last Parliaments, (all true *Patriots* and *Church-men*, that have given security to the Government,



Government, by taking such *Tests and Oaths* as the Law requires,) are convincing demonstrations, that 'tis not the *Church and State*, but some certain persons that care not how the World goes, (so their present ends be accomplished,) are Authors of the severeties some feel, from the Execution of such Laws, as stand lookt upon, rather to be sorb'd by publick Votes, as aforesaid; And which ('tis hop'd) that *August Assembly* (*King, Lords, and Commons*) when His Majesty will be pleas'd to call a Parliament, will mitigate, to the great joy of many Innocent Subjects, that mind only their own particular Concerns, and quietly submit to the Establish'd Government.

## SECT. VI.

AT the writing of this, there came to my hands a Paper newly published, with this Title, *A Second Argument for a more full and firm Union amongst all good Protestants, wherein the Nonconformists taking the Sacrament after the manner of the Church of England, is justified, &c. In a Letter to a Friend.* Because the Scope of it is not only to magnifie the Church of England, (which I do not in the least reflect upon) but also to fix an *Odium* upon *Dissenters*, and render them more intollerable in the Eye of the Government, than the Charity of many Pious and Learned Conformists either desire, or think seasonable; I have thought it agreeable to the Nature of my Subject, to leave a few modest Remarks upon it. And,

1. If the *Conversion* of such *Dissenters*, as are mentioned p. 1. be really the Effect of *Conviction* of mind, without any sinister ends, I shall not blame them for walking according to their *Light*, for that were to contradict the Design of these few Sheets, viz. *The Exercise of a Charitable meekness towards our weak Brethren.* But if it be merely for fear of the Penal Prosecution there likewise mentioned, it is probable that the Advocates of such a practice, (viz.) to Conform to such things as they before cry'd down as not *Evangelical*, or at best think still to be doubtful,) will hardly prove *Martyrs*.

*Temporizing* is *Diametrically* opposite to the Nature of *Christianity*. And such as are for selfish worldly ends, list themselves among the purest Professors of *Evangelical Truths*, are justly branded with the ignominious Name of *Hypocrites*. But whether these Men do it out of Conscience, or  
for

for any By-ends, *The Lord only knows*, for he is *the Searcher of Hearts*; and there we leave it.

The Expressions p. 2. are so perplex and unintelligible, that I cannot well pick out the meaning of it. If by *Sons of Leviathan* (bating the unusualness of the Phrase) be meant, the *Romish Clergy*; the Paper then supposes such, to be *Infringers* among the *Dissenters*, and of great *Influence* over them: But that is no less than a malicious and groundless *Slander*. And I Challenge this Author to justify the surmise by any *Demonstrative Instances*. Or,

2. If it means the *Teachers* of the *Dissenters*, (for one of these it must be) who are represented as frightening the people from *Conformity*, and scaring them out of *Church* by calling it, and its Ministers, *Antichristian*; let the Author produce the Words or Writings of any eminent *Nonconformist Preacher* or *Preachers*, that have branded the *Church of England* with that Odious *Epithete*, and I will joyn with him to abhor the *Calumniators*. All *Sober Dissenters* universally agree, that the *Romish Hierarchy* is the *Antichrist* spoken of in the *Scripture*; and it was lately well proved in a *Treatise* Intituled, *Schematologia*, by a *Dissenting Preacher*. And for them to make the *Church of England* another *Antichrist*, is not only dissonant to their publick and avowed *Principles*, but the highest violation of that *Charity*, and *Divine Principle of Love* which they owe to their *Christian Conforming Brethren*, that agree with them in all the substantial parts of the *Faith*, and differ only in *Circumstances* confessedly indifferent by the very *Imposers*.

I am surprized to find such a *Scheme of Divinity* in this Paper, p. 3. as I never yet saw or heard from a *Protestant Writer*. All things necessary to *Salvation* are *peremptorily* laid down by this Author, in these four particulars; upon which take a few Notes.

1. *The Learning of a good Catechism, to aid and conduct their Faith.*
2. *A good and well Composed Form of Prayer to discharge their Devotion.*
3. *To hear Learned and Good Men Preach to revive and quicken them to Duty.*
4. *To Square and Regulate their Lives by Moral Precepts (or the Law of Nature.)*

Here's the *sum total* of what's necessary to *Salvation* in this Author's Opinion.—But he is not content *Dogmatically* to make so *Diminutive* a *Reduction of Christianity*, but will also ensure your Soul for you, in these words,——“The which [meaning the said particulars] whosoever shall humbly and carefully observe, constantly and Conscientiously per-  
“form,



\* *form, we [what we is himself, as if he had been the Representative of the Church of England] will assure them Salvation, and undertake to Answer to God for them, and be content to stand chargeable with their Blood, if they do miscarry, &c.*

1. As to the First, 'tis confessed that *Catechistical Instructions* were used in the Primitive Times, and since; and that if rightly managed, it is a necessary expedient to inform the Judgments of the Ignorant. But I never yet know that it was made to lead the Van of such *Articles*, as are necessary to Salvation, before. It is a means indeed, which (as the Spirit of God Influences) may be Instrumentally subservient to Convert the unconverted. But 'tis meer *Popery* to Attribute any such Virtue to it, as if the meer Learning of a bare Form of *Catechistical Questions and Answers*, were a thing necessary to Salvation; and this I take to be the Papers meaning.

The way of *Catechising* in the Primitive Ages of *Christianity*, was for some of the *Church Elders* to call the Youth and other Ignorant Persons together, at some certain Times, and examine them concerning the Faith; always explaining what was obscure to their weak understandings, not tying themselves to any Form, but administering their *Questions*, and shaping their *Instructions* as the Capacity of the *Catechumens* required, like *Divine School-Masters* teaching their *Spiritual Pupils*, and with fervent Prayers recommending the success to God; the Converter of Souls. So that *Catechising* is no more than a Christian endeavour, or expedient for the begetting of Faith,—not an aid and conduit of Faith (as the Paper words it) because the persons *Catechis'd*, were supposed to be yet unconverted. Besides, to make *formal Catechising* a positive means of Salvation, is to Damn all that have not the opportunity to Learn it by Heart, and yet that there are many such in the World, that are nevertheless saved, is undoubtedly known to this Author, who seems to make *Christianity* consist in *External Forms*, and a Moral Deportment, or Conversation.

2. As to the Second, *viz. A good and well Composed Form of Prayer to discharge their Devotion.* It sounds so different from *Praying with the Spirit and Understanding*, that I cannot but marvel at it.

I do not at all blame such as use Forms of Prayer, for they may, for ought I know, Pray with the Spirit likewise, considering the Form prescribed by our Lord Jesus himself, *Matth. 6.* But this is as clear as the Sun, that neither in all the *New Testament*, nor the First Three Hundred Years, there can be produced any Record of known Credit, that any stinted Forms were Imposed; And good Reason; for all the Children of God, can represent their grievances to their Heavenly Father. And though their

their Petitions are expressed in *Lisping Notes*, or by the *unutterable* groans of the Spirit; yet they are not for all that rejected any more than a *joying Father* would deny his hungry Child a piece of Bread, because he cannot speak plain, or uses not a *Formal Address* for it.

But for this *Author* to make a *Form of Prayer* necessary to Salvation, is to Damn such as will not, or do not, make their Applications to the *Mercy Seat*, in the stunted and *Composed* Conceptions of others, which possibly may not reach their Case, or (as he calls it) *discharge their Devotion*.

3. As to the Third thing necessary to Salvation, *viz. To hear Learned and Good Men Preach, to revive and quicken to Duty*. I say, That to attend the Sacred Dispensations of the Word of Truth, in order to growth in Grace, and Spiritual Edification, is a *Christian Duty*.—And that the *Preacher* ought to be Learned in the *Scriptures*, and a *Good Man*, that is of such Goodness as the utmost pressing after it, can arrive at. If the *Author* means by Learning and Goodness, what may be merely attainable by School Faculties, and that which the *Philosophers* call *Morality*, abstracted from the Influences of *Converting and Evangelical Grace*, I must Dissent from him till he proves, that *Christianity* and *Morality* are one and the same thing; Or that, *Morality* is that *Grace* by which we are *saved through Faith*. If he proves that, it will follow that the coming of Christ to Plant an *Evangelical Religion* in the World, and by his Death to save Mankind was unnecessary, because Salvation might have been attain'd by the *Philosophy of Plato*, and the rest of the *Heathen Moralists*. This *Authors* Divinity seems to look this way: For his fourth thing necessary to Salvation, is for Men to *Square and Regulate their Lives by Moral Precepts (or the Law of Nature)*. To which I say, That *Christians* ought to do not only this, but more too, so that *Christian Duty* terminates not here; It is not confined to practical or speculative *Morality*, which is only a Branch or Species of *Christianity*, and is as much in degree below that *Faith and Spiritual Grace* that saves the Soul through the *Efficacy of the Blood of Christ*, as the Body is below the Soul. The one is exercised in Principles of Common Equity betwixt Man and Man,—comprehended in that saying, *Do as ye would be done unto*: The other is exercised in a *Spiritual Commerce* with the Divinity by *Faith, Prayer*, and other *Gospel Graces*, which *Natural Philosophy* (merely consider'd as such) can no more perform, than a Man stark Blind can judge of Colours, or *Lazarus* could get out of his Grave before the All quickning power of the Mediator rais'd him. The *Gospel* represents such as were *Naturally Alive*, to be *Spiritually Dead*. And *Philosophy*

*Idolophy* without Grace is Character'd by the *Apostle* to be a vain, seducing thing.

Before I touch upon the Reasons of this *Author*, in justification of *Nonconformists* taking the Sacrament after the manner of the *Church of England*, give me leave to put in this Caution; That I do not in what I write directly or indirectly, dispute against the Lawfulness of the Administration of this Ordinance, as us'd in the said Church; but my Scope and Intention is, to shew how unreasonable it is, for this *Author* to represent the *Nonconformists* as such silly *Seckaries*, because they hant so wide a Throat as he, to swallow what they cannot Digest; and consequently, that such of them as Dissent out of pure Conscience, though they suffer such Penalties, as this Gentleman it seems does not care to be concern'd in, are to be born withal, whilst they behave themselves peaceably and dutifully towards the Civil Government. And to give him a hint, that if he be one of those well-meaning *Dissenters*, that has *Conversed* well near 30 Years amongst them (as he says) p. 1. then either he saw their folly and groundless scrupulosity (as he angrily calls it) before the present juncture, or not: If he saw it before, and would not make discovery of it in order to his full and firm Union, as he Baptizes his Pamphlet, how can he clear himself of Unfaithfulness, if not Hypocrisie, in not beginning this Blessed Achievement sooner, that he might prevent the jealousy of the Government, and the sufferings of so many Poor Families as he talks of.

But if he be but a new *Profesite* to the *Church of England*, and is Converted on a suddain, as on the one hand people will be apt to suspect him, because he chuses a time of suffering to forsake his Old Brethren, and think him a *Temporizer*: so on the other hand, he will be lookt upon as a *Novice* in Reformation, and Old Experienc'd Men, will hardly be perswaded to Learn their Religion from the little pedantick subtilties of such variable *Dissenters*, who move with the *State Comjass*.

These things I speak not from any prejudice against the *Author*, (whoever he be) but to put him in mind, in a Spirit of meakness, that it would better become him rather to exercise Charity towards his forsaken Brethren, (if he has been a *Dissenter*) and since he has freed himself from the lash of suffering, that he would not add to their burthen, at so Licentious a Rate as he does in this Pamphlet. If they are in an Error, let him leave them to God, as they are willing to leave him quietly to the happiness of the secure Station he has chosen.

In p. 4. he begins his Proofs, which the Judicious and Conscientious *Nonconformist* will look upon more subtil then solid. All that I shall re-

mark as to that, will be this, because my Work is not to disapprove the Communion of the Church of England, but to intreat the Prosecutors to shew Christian Compassion to peaceable *Dissenting Protestants*; that this Author would if he writes a *Third Argument*, resolve me a few plain *Queries*.

1. Whether the positive Rules set down by the *Sovereign Legislator* (with respect to his Ordinances) are not to be observed by Christians exactly, without any Addition or Subtraction, as near as can be?

2. Whether it be not an Impeachment of the *Divine Wisdom*, to suppose his Laws imperfect? Or that he stands in need of *Spiritual Privy Council*, to Regulate and Establish the Circumstances of his Lordship?

3. Whether, if the said *Divine Laws* be perfect, and unalterable, (as they certainly are) any quiet, and Conscientious *Dissenter*, ought to be punished for Non observance of such Ceremonies as are confess'd to be of a meer Humane Original?

4. Whether it be an Argument of *Piety*, for such as have got on the warm side of the Hedge, to pelt dirt at those that cannot stride so largely, or jump over so nimbly as they do?

For my part I thought, and still think, that the things necessary to Salvation, may be comprehended under this short Sentence, *viz. To Love God with all our Hearts, and our Neighbours as our selves*; which is the *Epitome of Christian Religion*, and a *Compendium* of the first and second Table.

Faith in Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the World, who is God, Co-equal and Co-essential with the Father, and a Life and Conversation suitable to the Sacred Rules of the *Scriptures of Truth*, which comprehends *Morality and Duties* purely Divine too, do constitute a Christian: And if this Mans Scheme of Religion mentioned before, be true, which as far as I can see, reaches no further then to what the Law of Nature teaches,—then he may throw away that superfluous thing called the *Bible*, and study *Seneca*, and *Hobs his Leviathan*, &c.

Certainly this Author has but a despicable Opinion of Faith, though the Scripture says, *That 'tis impossible to please God without it*; when he cannot afford it a little room among his things necessary to Salvation,—only supposes Men to have it, by which I have ground to suspect, that the Faith he means, is nothing but some kind of *Moral persuasion*, or other, that being suitable to the rest of his Discourse. His little Pedantick *Dilemma's*, to justify the Communion of the Church of England, p. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. are meerly frivolous; because no sober, nor wise *Dissenter* (as far as I can see) Condemns that Communion. 'Tis only some things respect-

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ing the Circumstances of Administration, that they disallow, as being not so exactly Quodrate with the Rule. Therefore let this *Author*, (if he will do any thing to the purpose) leave beating the Air, and draw a parallel between the Communion he justifies, and what is written of it in *Scripture*.

1. Respecting the persons Administring. 2. The persons receiving. 3. The manner how. 4<sup>th</sup>. The Time when. And 5<sup>th</sup>. To what end. And if he makes them agree, then he will Convert all the *Dissenters* in that great Point, for which they suffer. But if they do not agree, then let this *Dilemma-maker* give us some Reasons for the Disparity, and by what Authority the alteration was made: Or else in good earnest let him even appear bare-fac'd, and blunder it out in plain *English*, That the *Laws of God* are subservient to the *Institutions* that *Humane Policy* thinks fit to superadd. I would withal, intreat the *Author* to bleis the World with a like parallel about *Infant-baptism*, that he may reduce those *Dissenters* that have no good Opinion of it.

But now comes the Mortal Wound (as he thinks) have a care poor *Phanaticks*! ————— Here the greatest number of them are affirm'd to hold Principles dangerously Heretical, and most abominably abusive of the most Holy and Blessed God; — yea, they ungod him. This is most sad indeed, — but wherein I pray? By making him the greatest *Author of mischief*, — folly, &c. by their idle Dreams about his Peremptory and Eternal Decrees. Oh! There's the business; this is the excellent and stupendous folly [sic Rhetorick] which he admires at.

Here you see how he brands the poor *Dissenters* for the most abominable of Hereticks; and how does he prove it? Why he Fathers an Opinion upon them, which none but a mad-Man will own, and then pours you out a long winded *Rhapsody* of such Devilish Consequences, as are able to scare a body out of all Charity with the *Dissenters*.

For my part, if I had thought it had been such a Damnd thing to believe, That God fore-ordain'd whatsoever should come to pass, — I would never have done it. Well, but the *Author* is pelting soundly at his *Mind of Sen*, and the *Odium* is thrown upon the greatest part of the *Dissenters*. What I shall say in reply, is this,

1. If there be any body guilty of this *Herese*, viz. That God is the *Author of Sin*, I heartily leave him at this *Authors* Mercy, for I look upon that Opinion to be no better then he represents it. But,

2. He is too uncharitable to charge the greatest number of the *Dissenters* with it, who for any thing, I find Discourse only of the Decrees of God,

as *Predestination, Election, &c.* as the *Scripture* represents them, and as the greatest part of the *Church of England* holds.

3. I could wish that Men were temperate, and modest in writing and discoursing of these great Secrets of Gods Decrees, and forbear to Extort Consequences with such violence from doubtful and obscure places. Men have got such an *Itch* to Espouse some Darling Opinion or other, that no reason can remove them from it, though *Christianity* languishes in the very Vitals of it, by these Brawls and Animosities. I have known too many that won't trouble their Heads with the most certain and most Important Duties of the Gospel, that instead of reading the Commandments, and the plain Practical Parts of *Scripture*, will needs be making Comments upon the obscurest *Allegories* of the Prophets, and the Revelation of St. *John*. Pray what necessity have we to confound poor simple Christians with those School Tricks, which much Idle and Licentious Wits, peester the *Church of Christ*? It was enough for the Apostle to know nothing but *Jesus Christ, and him Crucified*, (as was said) and 'tis most assuredly true, that whatsoever is necessary to Salvation, is so plainly laid down in the *Scripture*, that the meanest Capacity may (by the aid of Divine Grace) understand it.

'Tis therefore a dangerous piece of wantonness to be peeping into the Secret Cabinets of the Almighty, and I am sure, such Fooleries have done much mischief in the World. For,

1. 'Tis enough for us to know that the Lord God hath chosen a people for himself, *viz.* such as believe in him, and obey his Laws, and that he will Eternally save them. And,

2. That such as reject his Grace and Mercy, and disobey his Gospel, will fall under his Eternal Wrath.

With this Belief I content my self, and firmly hold, That God is not, nor cannot be the *Author* of any Evil, but on the contrary that he is the *Author* of all Good. I believe that Man's Damnation is purely and Originally from his own wickedness, and that his Eternal Destruction is not from any Decree of God; which whosoever saies, does at the same time affirm, That God does Damn him for what he cannot possibly avoid.

On the other side I Beleave, that no Man can save himself, but that the Lord *Jesus Christ* is the only and sole *Author* and *Cause* of Salvation, and that he alone purifies the corrupt Wills and Hearts of Men, adapting and preparing them to receive his Grace and saving Truths, through the Power and Influence of the Holy Spirit. This is my *Creed*, in this Point, and here I rest, not proposing it by way of Imposition on others, but to shew that



that this moderate middle path, which in my Judgment is Sound and Orthodox, and would lead us to the desirable *Mansions of Peace*, out of which our *Pulpit-Wars* have a long time kept us.

I doubt some Intemperate *Zealots*, that would as soon part with their Eyes, as their Notions, will be grumbling at what I say, as too favourable to one side or other. But as I regard not unjust censure, so I Challenge them to mend it. Methinks if these general Truths, and some such like, be enough for the people to know they do the Church no good service, that instead of Preaching Practical Duties, will needs be frightening the *Auditory* with hidden Decrees, absolute Reprobation, and some such new made *Thunder-Bolts*, able to scare 'em into Despair. God Commanded his Gospel to be Preach'd to *all the World*, that such as would receive it should be saved. But these Men have got you a hidden Decree, which Damns the greatest part of Mankind, yet without the hand of any *Heavenly Notary* to testify it. And pray tell me, what is it more or less, than to mock the poor people, to invite them to believe, &c. when 'tis impossible for them savingly to do it, if their Names be Registered in that black and irreverible *Muster Roll*.

I do not design to reflect upon any, nor do I Lift my self with those who follow *Arminius*, or *Calvin*; I am sorry to find extreams on both hands. I would only beseech *Dissenters* to Preach necessary Truths, and let the hidden Decrees of God alone, with other unnecessary Notions; which practice will undoubtedly be of great and useful Consequence, and will prevent the Bawling of such *Authors* as this is, who I believe will not Quarrel with what I here write, nor charge his horrible Consequences upon it; and yet I am sure, all Sober *Dissenters* are of this mind. For I never yet met any of them, but upon a sober debate, as occasion offered it, were obliged by fair Argument to own it. And he that believes this, believes enough, as to this Point, and more will but distract and confound the plain and honest Christian. I have been the longer about this, to let this *Author* know, that his charge of *Heresie* is stretcht unreasonably wide, and I hope I have gain'd this much by taking notice of this Pamphlet, that upon a serious and unbiass'd perusal of this few Remarks, any Reader of common Capacity will see a necessity of better Arguments than he uses. And 'tis hop'd, that our Church will use that way of reducing *Dissenters*, viz. Mild Christian Debates and Conferences, Sober Brotherly Persuasions, with hearty Prayers for each other; which were the Church Weapons of the Primitive Christians, not such Whirlwind and Thunder, as some certain *Reprogers*, yonder at *Algiers*, or thereabouts, would Con-  
jure.

jore up, against a little Scatter'd Fleet of their *Quandam* Friends.

I profess I cannot but wonder at the unparallel'd Confidence of this Pamphlet, that blushes not to charge the greatest part of the *Sectaries*, (as its young zeal words it) meaning *Protestant Dissenters*) with *making God the Author of wickedness*, in such terms as quoted before; which is no less then to charge them with the *blackest of Blasphemies*. Now the Laws of our Land have provided Condign punishment for that (most) Monstrous of Treasons, against the King of Kings. And the Author cannot acquit himself of *Misprison*, if he gives not a *Catalogue* of such horrible *Delinquents*, that the Law may punish them, and that all Christians may shun them as the worst of *Herculicks*. Let him produce that, together with Legal Evidence, and then *for Justice*, let new *Tylburns* be erected for them, if the Legislative Authority thinks fit.

Reader, I have almost done with this Pamphlet, which I believe will Proselite only such as are under the Influence of something I shall not name. Only give me leave to add a few Lines by way of observation, upon the *specimen*, the Author gives of the *Wit and Policy* of these giddy *Sectaries*, (as he calls them.)

*Would they have* (saith he) p. 12.) *Arch-Bishops,—Bishops,—the best Clergy,—all the best Clergy of England,—Tythes,—Universities,—Parish Levys,—Down?* This he Answers with a parcel of Gingling, *Tes, Tes, Tesses.*

Then to fill up the Vacuities, he insinuates that these same *Sectaries* would Elect *Tinkers, Taylors, Watermen, Shoemakers, Coffee-men, Hat-Dressers, &c.* concluding with a pious Irony, *That the Christian World must be acquainted with this Honourable—Reformation!*

In the first place the Slander is Venemous, and the Deportment of the Grave and Reverend *Nonconformist Preachers* since His Majesties happy Restauration, confutes this wild Calumny. Let him name those giddy Fools, and let them be exposed for their silliness; Else let him avoid the charge of turning a false *Accuser of the Brethren, if he can.*

All that *Protestant Dissenters* desire, is but a Liberty to serve their God, according to their Light, in Cottages, or any where, quietly, without any Combination against the Government; nor do they begrudge the Governours of the Church their Dignities or Revenues. When they do otherwise, let them be stigmatiz'd with a Witness for me; for then they cease from being the Disciples of Christ, *whose Kingdom is not of this World.*

*Secondly*, If he has been a benefic'd Holder *Ordn* amongst these *Sectaries*,



ries, he might have nam'd his own Trade with the rest; And should have Demonstrated which of those *Mechanicks*, have aspired to such high Church Dignities; without that, the Tale signifies nothing. There were *Mechanick Preachers* in the Primitive Times, I am sure; 'tis well they escape this Gentlemans lash; he deserves thanks for that Civility, however.

Well but (says the Pamphlet, p. 13.) for forty years they have made no Bank, built no Free-Schools, purchas'd no Church-Lands,—pay no Tythes,—won't consent to have all things common,—their Preachers go a Begging,—&c.

This I must confess is a frightful charge, and able to scare their *Preachers* away from them, if they only gape for a Benefice. But the *Author* did not consider that this is a good Argument against his Insinuations of their Ambition, for if this be true, then the Government needs not fear them, and the Prosecution of Penal Laws may be spar'd, when the *Sectaries* make no provision for their Ministers, nor do incorporate themselves into a formidable Faction. Besides, since the Case is thus (or the Pamphlet tells a Whisker) either the *Dissenting Preachers*, (as formerly hinted) are Fools to go a Begging, when they may be welcome to our Church, and provided for, or else their *Dissent* is from pure Conscience, and so, Christian Charity would rather pity than persecute them.

To conclude this *Section*, if the *Author* of this Paper thinks fit to go on, let him produce Arguments of weight and solidity, and wave the Language of Reproach, and he will either convince us, or be answered soberly.

## S E C T. VII.

**A**FTER this tedious *Parenthesis*, which unlookt for, fell in my way, I will re-assume my Discourse, and in all humility offer some Reasons; that the Intention of the *Law-makers*, was for suppressing Sedition, and Conspiracies against the Government, and not merely to punish quiet and peaceable *Dissenters*. And will in order thereunto, give you an Abstract of the words of an Ingenious *Author*, lately published.

The Laws against *Dissenters* are of two different Natures. 1. Some Statutes are wholly designed against *Papists*, and ought only to be Executed against them, tho' some would have them put in Execution against

*Dissenting*

*Dissenting Protestants*, for not coming to Church, and receiving the Sacraments, &c.

2. The Laws indeed that were made against *Puritan Sectaries* (as they call them) or *Dissenting Protestants*. The Statutes of the first sort, are in Number five, viz. The 1. *Elizabeth*, ca. 2. the 23. *Elizabeth*, ca. 1. the 29. *Elizabeth*, ca. 6. the 1. *Jac.* ca. 4. and 3. *Jac.* ca. 4.

Here good Reader, I thought to have enlarged, but upon second thoughts (having resolv'd to be as brief as may be) I judge it more to your satisfaction to refer you to a late Treatise Intituled, *English Liberties*, where from p. 171. to p. 200. you have this Subject handled with much judgment, candor, and clearness; the Book is to be had at any Booksellers, and is well worth every *English-mans* perusal.

The Author plainly demonstrates that these Statutes intend only the Prosecution of *Papists*, and therefore all the reason and equity in the World will disallow their being put in Execution against peaceable *Protestant Subjects*, who are no way concern'd in them; which was the Opinion of the House of Commons, who were more likely to Interpret a doubtful Law, then such particular Justices and others, as are now so busie to Execute them against the mind of the *Law-makers*.

*Sabbati, Sexto Die Nov. 1680.*

“Resolved *nemine contradicente*, That it is the Opinion of this House, that the Acts of Parliament made in the Reigns of *Queen Elizabeth*, and *King James*, against Popish Recufants, ought not to be extended against *Protestant Dissenters*.”

That the 35th. of *Eliz.* is not now in force, the same *Author* Evidences by such solid and convincing Demonstrations, that they are in my judgment unanswerable, p. 181. &c.

And the sum is, that there are now no Laws in being to punish the *Conventicles*, and the *Non-conformist* Ministers, who did not Conform to the *Act of Uniformity*, made in the Reign of His present Majesty; But the *Act* commonly called the *Five Mile*, or *Oxford Act*, and the *Conventicle Act*, made the 22th. of our present Sovereign. These you have also judiciously handled, *Ibid.*

He that will seriously peruse these several Statutes, and lay aside prejudice, must needs conclude that it is not the meer *Dissent* which our *Law-makers* intend to punish, for the *Conventicle Act* allows any Family to Worship God in their own way, provided there be no more then four persons besides the *Doers*. Nor does it punish meerly for the num-  
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VI. *Some Reasons for Separation from the Communion of the Church of England, and the unreasonableness of Persecution upon that Account in a Dialogue.*

#### ADVERTISEMENT.

There is now in the Press, a very useful Book, Intituled, *The Childs Delight*. Containing a Scripture Catechism, wherein all the Chief Principles of the Christian Religion are clearly (though briefly) open'd, necessary to Establish young People in Gods Truth, in Opposition to Popery in these Perilous Times, together with many other things, both Pleasant and Useful for the Christian Education of Youth. Illustrated with several Pictures curiously Engraven on Copper Plates. By B. K. Author of the *War with the Devil*. Sold by T. Knapton, at the Corner of Great and Little Tower-street. And by John Haw next door to the Blew-Bore without Bishopgate. Price Bound 6 pence.

ber neither, unless there be Sedition, or a Conspiracy of the Parties meeting to disturb the Peace, or contrive Insurrections, or Traytorous Designs against the Government.

If there be any such meetings to be found, that instead of a pious and peaceable Worshipping of God, will be meditating Rebellion, let the utmost severity of the Law be put in Execution against them, for then they cease from being Christians, when they become Traytors; and such only, *viz.* Disturbers of the Peace, the just Laws of *England* design to suppress. But if there be no such wicked Practices or Conspiracies, but on the contrary a peaceable Deportment, and quiet, harmless behaviour to be found, in the meetings of these *Dissenters*, with what Conscience can those Laws be put in Execution against the Innocent, which were meant only to suppress Sedition, and secure the Government against such as actually disturb it? That that was the intention of the Legislators, *viz.* to punish only the guilty, is evident, and for any one to stretch those Statutes beyond the ends for which they were designed, is no less, then to shew himself undutiful to his Sovereign, unnaturally cruel to his poor Countrymen, an oppressor of his Brethren, and obnoxious to a severe Reckoning, in the great Day of Accounts. I have demonstrated before that, *Compulsion of Conscience* is Diametrically opposite to the Law and Word of God, yea, that it is morally impossible to make a Man believe against his Reason; and consequently that the Effects of *Compulsion* is only to force Men to Hypocrisis, since no external force can Convert the Soul.

Now I shall annex some *Quotations* from the Fundamental Laws of *England*, which express such a tenderness of the Law of God, that it tells you in down-right terms, *That no Act of Parliament, or Law, repugnant to the Law of God, is of any force*, Finch. p. 3. *And that no Man of what Estate, Degree, or Condition whatsoever, hath power to dispense with Gods Law, as all the Clergy of the Realm, and most of the Universities of Christendom, and we also affirm*, 28. H. 8. *And that against Scripture, Law, Prescription, Statute, nor Custom may avail; and if any be brought in against it, they be void, and against Justice.* Doctor, and Student, &c.

Now, besides what hath been said before of the Law of God, (which the Law of the Land positively declares—indispensible,) take here a brief specimen of it.

1. All Men are Commanded to hear, learn, and keep it, and ought to be in their respective Stations, according to Divine Rules, ready to Communicate such Gifts as Christ bestows upon them, in order to Edify others. Mistake me not (Reader) I do not plead for any promiscuous or irregular Liberty, for any person to step beyond the bounds prescribed by the Sovereign Legislator; but to shew you that where a Talent is given, it should be improved. We find in Scripture, that there were Preaching Kings, Printes, Judges, Levites, *Psal. 40. 9. Eccl. 1. 1. and 12. 13. 2 Chron. 17. 7, 8, 9.* Yea, Preaching Mechanicks, Tradesmen, Tent-makers, Fishermen, &c. *Mark 6. 3. Amos 1. 1. Mark 1. 16, 17. Ait. 18. 2. 1 Cor. 14. 1, 2, 31.*

2. God's Law pronounces a *Wo* to his Preachers, if they Preach not his Gospel, *1 Cor. 9. 16.*

3. Rewards and Promises are promised to Preachers, *Matth. 10. 41. and 25. 21. and 5. 19. James 5. 20.*

4. God's Law allows Preaching in Houses, Streets, Fields, &c. Yea, to great multitudes, with promised Mercies to the owners so receiving them, *Ait. 20. 20. and 28. 31. Luk. 13. 26. Matth. 3. 1. and 10. 40, 41, 42.*

5. God's Law denounces wrath to such as abuse his Preachers, and beat their fellow Servants, *1 Thess. 2. 16. Matth. 24. 48, 49, 50.*

6. God's Law injoyns Men to Assemble together in order to his Worship, *Heb. 10. 25. and 3. 13. Ait. 2. 42. Mal. 3. 14. 16.* Yea, Thousands at a time, *John 6. 10. Ait. 44. and 2. 41. &c.* much more to the same purpose may be quoted. Now, I appeal to all sober Christians, whether any Law that contradicts this Divine Law, or by coercive means, and rigid penalties, keeps Christians from these Duties, ought not to be relaxt, and forbore to be put in Execution, because all humane Laws, are to give place to the Law of God, as our very National Laws assert; and whether the Dissem of a peaceable Conscientious People, from meet Ceremonies not enjoyned by the Statute Law of Heaven, deserves so rigorous a Treatment as a great many have felt, and still feel? &c.



## S E C T. VIII.

**B**Efides the Law of God, and the Law of the Land, which sweetly harmonize together, (when the latter is not stretched beyond its meaning, by some whose Charity appears only in the Ruine of their poor honest Neighbours,) I would urge that great *Magna Charta* of Nature, a Law so just and comprehensive, that no Man can deny it, unless at the same time he dejects himself of Humanity, and assumes the shape of a barbarous, and more then brutish Cruelty. It is this (in few words) *Do as you would be done unto.* This Golden Text Reverend amongst the very Heathens (whose Precept it was, *Quid tibi non vis, alteri ne feceris*) might administer a *Copious Theme*, but I shall be brief; And content my self to ask two Questions of those Gentlemen, that are so busie in putting these Penal Laws in Execution; But still let me repeat the Caveat I have so often mentioned,—that I plead not the Cause of Seditious Meetings, or such as contrive or design any evil against the State; but only such as *Dispart* purely out of Conscience, and manage their separation with *Respect* towards God, and *Loyalty* to the King, together with a Christian becoming Deportment towards their Neighbours.

1. Whether they, (that is such as prosecute the *Protestant Dissenters*,) would be so dealt withal themselves? viz. to be Imprison'd, Fin'd; Depriv'd of their Goods; Banish'd from their dearest Relations; Wives; Children, &c. sever'd from their Trades and Callings, (when they live by the Labour of their hands, or the faculties they were brought up to); have their Families beg or starve, and in a word, utterly ruin'd, as to this World; and that merely because they cannot Conform to what they are not convinc'd of, to be of Divine Institution? Or being Men of Conscience, will not be led by any Implicite Faith; if not, methinks they should use the same tenderness to others, or else they violate this Law, (made Sacred *Matth. 7. 12.*)

2. Whether, if it had been their Lot to live in a Country where *Papery*, or *Presbyterianism*, is the publick Religion, would they look upon it to be just and fair dealing, meerly for their Conscientious *Dissent* to be forc'd to a Hypocritical Compliance, or be ruin'd in their Estates, if not Lives?

## S E C T. IX.

**T**He Grand *Topick* which the little mercenary *Pasquillers* use to justify their *Investives* against *Dissenters*, is the late dismal Rebellion, and the horrid Murther of His Majesties Royal Father, &c. This is a Subject which I would not touch upon, but that I am forc'd by the dayly Clamours of these *Pamphletters* to speak a few words to it. And,

1. If I know my own Heart, I can truly say, That I do from my very Soul abhor and detest all Principles that tend to Rebellion, or Disturbance of the publick or private Peace, and all such wicked persons as Imbrue their hands in the Blood of any Man, Woman, or Child, much more any such Traytors as practice against the Sacred Life or Person of the *Lord's Anointed*, for such persons are so far from deserving any favour or protection from the Government, that they ought to be rooted from off the face of the Earth, as the most execrable of *Miscreants*. And therefore let the *Authors* of our late Calamities, and the unparalleled Murther of that Great and most Excellent Prince, be branded with everlasting Infamy for me. 'Tis not for Traytors, but for my Innocent fellow-Christians, that I beg the favour and pity of such as are intrusted with the Execution of Penal Laws for Religion.

2. How far the *Papists* did Influence those fatal Convulsions, and whether the Nation owes not all its Calamity to their black and mystical Stratagems, the judicious unbiass'd Reader will soon determine, if he peruses Mr. *Care's History of the Plot*, reprinted 1681. from p. 42. to 71. I have not Room to transcribe it,

it, and therefore would advise (any that doubts it) to peruse it there Intire, 'tis worth his while.

4. 'Tis Diametrically opposite to Justice, to punish the Innocent for the Crimes of the Guilty.—And admitting that a great many under the Vizard of Religion, had a main hand in these lamentable (and too too deplorable) mischiefs before mentioned; there is no equity in the World, that their Villanies shall be chargeable upon (and their punishment extend to) such as were never concern'd in them.

The best Religion in the World cannot secure it self from Hypocrites, that disguise themselves till they have an opportunity to serve some Devilish turn, or other. That *Arch-Traytor* and *Informers* *Judas*, got in among the very Apostles, and many false Brethren crept in among the Primitive Saints;—the Devil himself will sometimes come Masqueraded as an Angel of Light. Why is the Christian Religion ever the worse for this? No, no, Divine Truths are still such, though the Sacred Profession of it is prophan'd and abus'd by such Hypocritical Wretches, to their own Damnation.

What I aim at, is this, *viz.* that we are to examine the Principles of such as profess Christianity under any form, declared in their publick Confessions of Faith, and the Writings of such as are own'd, and approv'd by them, and if we find them pernicious to the Government, or tending any waies to the disturbance of the publick peace; such are without Dispute to be suppress'd and punish'd as Enemies to the State. But if their Principles be in all Articles of Religion suitable to the Word of God, and (in Fundamentals) to the Establish'd Religion; it will unavoidably follow, That the miscarriages, or wickedness of some that creep in amongst them, are not to be charged upon their Christian Profession, (which allows no such thing) but upon the *Delinquents* themselves.

From hence I infer, that the Murder of His late Majesty, those Rebellions, Bloodsheds, and Overturnings of State, &c. then acted, are to be chargeable only upon such as were personally and actually guilty. ————— For I never heard, (and I dare boldly say that no Man ever did hear) that any of our *Dissenting Protestants* in their Confessions of Faith, have ever had so much Traytorous Impudence, as to justify the least  
 title

titles of such horrid things, but the quite contrary, as may be shown in time.

If there be any now alive, who have had any hand in those dreadful Commotions, &c. If they have received His Majesties Pardon, they are thereby reinstated into equal Priviledges with the Innocent, unless by new Treasons they forfeit that Royal Grace. But if there be any of them excluded from the benefit of the *Act of Oblivion*, let them be punish'd, *sat Justitia*.

I insist the longer upon this, to shew how unreasonable it is, for such a parcel of *Hackney Scriblers* to be perpetually bawling of 41, 41, and making the Crimes of such as are Dead, or were Executed for their Treasons, not only survive them, but persecute their poor Innocent Fellow Subjects with them; I could with all my Heart, that all those *half-penny Pasquilles* on both sides, who meetly for their Bellies, pester City and Country, inventing Names of Reproach, as *Whigg, Tory, Trimmer*, &c. and begetting Feuds and Antimosities betwixt His Majesties Liege People, were severely punish'd as *Disturbers of the publick Peace*; I am sure they deserve it more then the *Dissenters*, who are a peaceable trading People, and usefull Members of the State, who pay His Majesty all His Taxes and Revenues, to the utmost of what the Law requires, (which is not inconsiderable.) How untollerable is it then, for free born Subjects, Loyal to the King, and helpful in supporting the charge of the Government to be daily and weekly Libel'd, and abus'd by those Rascally *Leeches of the Press*, that to serve their own little Craving Necessities, care not if they *set the People together by the Ears*?

His Majesty out of His Royal Clemency was pleas'd to pass an *Act of Oblivion*, yea, so impatient was he, that he prest the *Parliament* with much earnestness, to make it ready for his *Royal Assent*. What then? why here you have his goodness, and Princely Lenity reviled, and contradicted, (almost daily) by a certain *Incendiary*, who Conjures up the Memory of those fatal Times, and keeps the Nations Old Wounds a Bleeding, in defiance of that *Act*, which was design'd to heal, and make them forgotten.

## THE CONCLUSION.

I Intended upon this Subject to have given you a parallel between the Doctrine of the *Church of England*, and the *Dissenters*, but that I find it already well done by Mr. *Henry Care*, in his Book Intituled, *Utrum Horum*, &c. Printed 1682. To which I refer you, as also to the truly pious Treatises of that worthy Author (whoever he be) of the *Conformists Plea for the Nonconformists*, &c.

2. I purposed likewise to lay down some Demonstrative Reasons, why the *profession of Popery is intollerable in a Protestant Kingdom*, (whom they account *Hereticks*) because their Principles are Pernicious, and their Practices have been Dangerous, &c.

3. To shew the mischiefs, and sad Consequences of prosecuting quiet and peaceable *Dissenters* upon the Penal Laws, as having a direct tendency to weaken the *Protestant Interest*, for whose Ruine that common Enemy greedily gapes, (2.) How much it destroys Trade, and ruins Thousands of Families, (3.) What a Scandal it is to the *Protestant Reformation*, when we quarrel and persecute each other, (4.) What a disparagement it is to the Actors, &c.

4. To shew the quality of *Informers*, and the quality of such as they prosecute; with the Ravenous and Illegal proceedings of the former.

5. Produce Illustrious Testimonies of the worth of the *Dissenters*, and how serviceable they have been to the Crown, as also the Witness of as eminent Church-men and States-men, as ever were in *England*, who gave them great *Encomiums*, and own'd them as *Brethren*.

6. Propose a modest Essay for *Union* amongst all *Protestants*, with Demonstrative Reasons, that it is not only practicable, but absolutely necessary; together with the Blessed Effects of such an Accomodation.

But having already exceeded my intended limits, I must leave it to another opportunity, and my poor endeavours to the Blessing of the God of Peace.

F I N I S.